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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001793

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: ITURI UPDATE: GDRC SAYS "NO GUARANTEES" FOR
MILITIAS AFTER DECEMBER 31

REF: A. KINSHASA 1767
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 1768
[1](#)C. KINSHASA 1769

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Vice Minister of Defense Bernard Mena, who recently headed a GDRC delegation to meet with the region's militia leaders in Ituri District (reftels), characterized the meetings as "positive." Mena said he believed the militias were ready to disarm because their operations have been significantly curtailed by the Congolese military and MONUC. He stated militia leaders have until December 31 to bring their members in from the bush, after which there will be no further negotiations and "no guarantees." End summary.

MEETINGS SEEN AS "POSITIVE"

[1](#)2. (C) Bernard Mena, DRC Vice Minister of Defense for Military Integration, briefed PolOff and PolAsst November 22 to brief on his November 16-18 trip to Ituri District to jump-start stalled militia surrender negotiations. Mena said his meetings with Peter Karim of the Front for National Integration (FNI) and Mathieu Ngudjolo of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) were largely "positive" and helped clear remaining stumbling blocks to integration and disarmament. According to Mena, Karim and Ngudjolo pledged to disarm voluntarily and to send their fighters to integration centers. The accords signed between the GDRC and the two militias stipulated that Karim is to begin sending his forces to disarmament sites beginning November 27; Ngudjolo is to start his troops' surrender December 4.

AMNESTY QUESTION PUSHED TO DIFFERENT MINISTRY

[1](#)3. (C) Mena said the question of amnesty for Ituri's militia leaders is to be decided by the Ministry of Justice. The agreements signed by Karim and Ngudjolo both outline the "necessity to formalize amnesty," but did not provide any specifics. Mena said he personally is against granting amnesty to the militias, but admitted it was the only way to secure their disarmament.

"NO GUARANTEES" AFTER DECEMBER 31

[1](#)4. (C) Mena insisted the GDRC will not negotiate further with the militias after the end of the year. The FNI and MRC will

have until December 31 to demobilize. Mena said after this date funding for the DRC's national demobilization and disarmament program will run out, and the GDRC will be logistically unable to provide them any assistance. Mena said after the first of the year a new government and new parliament will be in charge, both with new "politics" and new ideas on how to address the Ituri militia problem. Mena would not say if the existing accords would be invalid after December 31, but added that there will be "no guarantees" after that time.

CONFIDENT THAT MILITIAS WILL SURRENDER

15. (C) Mena said he was confident Karim and Ngudjolo would abide by the agreements. He said a major obstacle preventing their groups from surrendering has been the lack of logistics to provide them transport to integration sites. Mena blamed CONADER, the DRC's national disarmament agency, with poor management and misappropriation of funds and equipment, leading to significant delays in the demobilization process. Mena said the Congolese military and MONUC will now be leading efforts to transport surrendering militia members to disarmament points.

ASSESSING THE MILITIAS AND THEIR LEADERS

16. (C) Mena estimated that Karim's FNI, Ngudjolo's MRC, and Cobra Matata's Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), account for a maximum of 5,000 militia members. He

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said claims that each militia has "thousands" of members are false. Mena said many militia members "work" for more than one group, thus artificially inflating the numbers each militia commander can claim as his own.

17. (C) Mena provided his personal assessment of both Karim and Ngudjolo, describing both as "destitute." Mena said Ngudjolo is in his early 40's and is a former "Garde Civile" nurse of the Armed Forces of Zaire (FAZ); he appeared "mature" and "balanced" compared to Karim, who reported is apparently in his early 20's, a drug addict, and influenced by a variety of "spiritual" leaders. Mena said Karim does not have any military bearing whatsoever. Both Karim and Ngudjolo are ethnic Lendus.

18. (C) The Vice Minister admitted that the militias are popular among many civilians. He explained the militias are often seen as "defenders" of the population against exactions of the Congolese military. He said he believes Ituri's militias have been supported as well by Ugandan interests, particularly by arms shipments via Lake Albert, but could not provide any evidence of this.

19. (C) Mena will be leading another GDRC delegation to Ituri beginning November 27 to follow up on the new accords.

COMMENT: MEET THE DEADLINE

110. (C) Demobilizing the militias remains the key to resolving Ituri District's security problems. Amnesty remains the main sticking point to this resolution. The militias will not disarm unless they receive it, but pushing the responsibility for granting it from one ministry to another raises questions about the GDRC's ability to provide it. End comment.

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